



## Online Print Symposium 2022: Six Startups in One Fell Swoop

**At first glance, the print industry is not necessarily associated with startups. But from today's perspective, three startups – Adobe, Aldus and Apple – triggered the desktop revolution in the early 1980s, leaving no stone unturned in prepress and subsequently shaking up the entire creative industry. In this respect, the printing industry was and is more innovative than is often assumed. This spirit of innovation was also upheld at the recent Online Print Symposium 2022 (OPS) in Munich in the form of the „Insight Pitches“ to present new technologies and business ideas.**

20 startups of all stripes applied for the six slots advertised. „An agile industry thrives on new ideas. Ideas that are often found by young, dynamic companies. The Insight Pitches brought together established and new companies. This gave the online print industry new impetus and this is how new business models can emerge,“ assures Jens Meyer of [printXMedia](#), the co-organizer of the OPS.

### **From cell phones to customized hoodies**

[Hoodie Hoo](#) was the first to start at the Insight Pitches. It presented an intuitive software and creator solution that uses its own API interface to manage textile production in Turkey. In this way, the start-up wants to reduce the long lead and delivery times as well as the high minimum purchase quantities, which are still a significant hurdle for many customers today. Hoodie Hoo wants to enable individual textile production from as little as 50 pieces and a production time of 20 days.

With the Creator, both B2C and B2B customers can create professional textile designs. According to founders Johannes Kautz and Philipp Hofmann, the design should even be possible on a cell phone and be as easy as creating an Instagram story. Orders are controlled via the software and customers can track each order step by step and approve their designs digitally. If you take a look at the reference list, you can see that brands of all sizes are already putting their trust in the start-up.

### **A web-to-print platform for the B2C market**

[Printess](#) is an online design platform based on a modular cloud platform and aimed at the B2C market. Behind Printess are the founders of DirectSmile, an image personalization software that was later sold to [EFI](#). In this sense, Printess acts like building a second house: you already know the pitfalls, and accordingly, the second time around should result in a near-perfect house, or in this case, an online design platform.

„The existing web-to-print solutions don't really cover the requirements of the B2C market,“ said co-founder Christoph Clermont. With Printess, he said, the company wants to establish a standard solution for the B2C market and thus make mass customization with application-specific templates accessible to all players. Today, in-house programming is no longer in keeping with the times, which is why a no-code solution was created to intuitively create the desired templates. Printess can be integrated into existing store solutions, but external graphic designers and printers can also be integrated into the workflow.

### **AI helps save costs in logistics**

Dylan Hirsch, CEO of [Lox Solution](#), already made OPS visitors sit up and take notice with his opening statement: „Every year, online print service providers pay up to 15 percent too much because they receive misleading or incorrect invoices from their logistics partners.“ With an AI-driven technologies, discrepancies in the logistics process should be detected and lots of money saved.

„Without an AI-based solution, you're at a loss when you're dealing with the volume of packages,“ Dylan Hirsch admits, while assuring that the solution can be installed in an hour and the savings are quickly felt. More than 100 e-commerce companies already rely on Lox Solution's tool.

### **Printed cans from the online store**

[Design'n Drink](#) is engaged in direct digital printing on beverage cans. The company has developed a technology that allows cans to be printed individually, starting with a run of twelve. The entire order process is handled via an online store, which includes a corresponding design tool. This can be used to access existing templates or to create an individual design.

The challenges here were not on the software side, but rather on the hardware side, as Managing Director Lukas Pflügl described. On the one hand, it was necessary to optimize the adhesion of the ink to the aluminum surface, which was achieved with a low-migration ink in combination with a pre-treatment and post-treatment station (plasma irradiation and primer). On the other hand, printing the neck-in at the top of the can was not so easy to accomplish. A special algorithm compensates for the different distances between the can and the inkjet print heads, thus achieving a uniform print image.

### **Exploiting existing potential**

[FotoSystem](#) is an intuitive, cloud-based photo management, mass customization and print platform. Sounds powerful – and if founder Siegfried Trinker has his way, it should be. Even from his point of view, the entire creation of photo products, and here in particular photo

books, is still far too complicated. Customers don't want to constantly install new software tools and need much more support when creating them.

According to industry expert Gary Pageau, the industry is not even beginning to exploit the existing growth potential. A contemporary end-to-end solution for photo products is therefore cloud-based and has AI support. With FotoSystem, this should be possible on a cell phone with a few clicks.

### **Online printing in Latin America**

Miki Rubin, founder and CEO of [Imprimu](#), gave an insight into the online print world in Latin America at OPS. He sees the low level of digitization in the printing industry and the difficulties in logistics due to the lack of street names and house numbers as challenges for the online print market. Despite all this, he says the Latin American market has enormous growth potential (total market over 70 billion US dollars).

To tap the market, Imprimu wants to build a continental print-on-demand network for the B2B as well as B2C segment, supported by local logistics providers. A pilot has already been implemented in the advertising materials sector. The next step will be to open up the Mexican and Colombian markets. Imprimu is looking for strategic partners for all further steps.

### **Summary**

The Insight Pitches offered an interesting cross-section of different industries and application fields and thus provided exciting impulses for the online print community. The exchange between young, creative entrepreneurs and established industry giants was successful. Both sides benefited: While some gained a new perspective on their own business from the start-ups' point of view, the latter in turn were able to learn from the experiences and know-how of the big players. The buzzwords that ran through all the presentations were artificial intelligence, cloud, online design tools, mobile and mass customization.

Incidentally, the date for the next Online Print Symposium has already been set: March 23-24, 2023 – again at the Science Congress Center Munich.

You can also read our first blog about the Online Print Symposium in Munich on the [Muller Martini website](#).

Yours

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